Running head: GENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES

Generational Differences and Their Affects on Preferred Communication Methods

Sean Douglas

Warrensburg Fire Department, Warrensburg, Missouri

September 2009

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is

set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that the appropriate credit is given where I have used

the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

Communication methods preferred by different generations are often cited as a barrier to effective communication across generations in the fire service. The potential impact of preferred communication methods on effective communication due to generational differences had not been identified in the Warrensburg Fire Department. The purpose was to identify ways to improve communication in the Warrensburg Fire Department by comparing individual and standard generational preferences for communication methods such as; one on one meetings, group meetings, telephone, e-mail, and memorandum. Examination of the following research questions was required. What are the preferred communication methods for Warrensburg Fire Department personnel? What communication method preferences should exist in the Warrensburg Fire Department based on standard generation archetypes? How do the identified individual and standard generational communication method preferences compare? What can be done to implement changes in the Warrensburg Fire Department to take advantage of the preferred communication methods? The descriptive research method was used. Questionnaires were developed to capture information relevant to the identification of standard generation archetypes and preferred individual communication methods of Warrensburg Fire Department personnel. Data collected was analyzed to produce recommendations for improving communications within the Warrensburg Fire Department. A general preference for face-to-face, meeting and telephone communication methods was indicated in the study. Training of department personnel regarding generations and preferred communication method preferences was recommended to improve communication. Further study was recommended regarding the affects of individual personality and occupation on preferred communication methods as well as study of the effectiveness of current organizational communication.

Table of Contents

Appendices

Generational Differences and Their Affects on Preferred Communication Methods

Introduction

Communication methods preferred by different generations are often cited as a barrier to effective communication across generations in the fire service. The potential impact of preferred communication methods on effective communication due to generational differences had not been identified in the Warrensburg Fire Department. The purpose was to identify ways to improve communication in the Warrensburg Fire Department by comparing individual and standard generational preferences for communication methods such as: one on one meetings, group meetings, telephone, e-mail, and memorandum.

Examination of the following research questions was required. What are the preferred communication methods for Warrensburg Fire Department personnel? What communication method preferences should exist in the Warrensburg Fire Department based on standard generation archetypes? How do the identified individual and standard generational communication method preferences compare? What can be done to implement changes in the Warrensburg Fire Department to take advantage of the preferred communication methods?

The descriptive research method was used. Questionnaires were developed to capture information relevant to the identification of standard generation archetypes and preferred individual communication methods of Warrensburg Fire Department personnel. Data collected was analyzed to produce recommendations for improving communications within the Warrensburg Fire Department.

Background and Significance

The Warrensburg Fire Department provides fire suppression, fire prevention, rescue, and medical first response services to the City of Warrensburg, Johnson County, Missouri. The

population of Warrensburg was 16,340 in the 2000 U.S. Census. The University of Central

Missouri, with an enrollment of approximately 11,000 students, is located in Warrensburg. A

large number of military and civilian personnel and their families assigned to Whiteman Air

Force Base, 10 miles east of Warrensburg, reside in Warrensburg. Johnson County, Missouri is

adjacent to the Kansas City Metropolitan Area, with Warrensburg being approximately 50 miles

southeast of Kansas City, Missouri.

The Warrensburg Fire Department has an authorized staffing of 56 positions; 5 full-time

administrative, 21 full-time shift personnel, 24 part-time personnel, and 6 student resident

positions. Personnel retention varies, with some personnel staying for long periods while other

personnel stay less than two years. The retention issues are often attributed to employment of

enrolled college students and military personnel along with proximity to the Kansas City

Metropolitan Area.

The average age of currently employed personnel is 35 years old, with ages ranging from

19 to 72 years of age. Discussions in staff meetings and with the Warrensburg Professional Fire

Fighters Association have attributed many department concerns to communication problems.

Discussions regarding the differences between various generations in the Warrensburg Fire

Department have also taken place. Communication problems or generation differences have not

been seriously analyzed in the Warrensburg Fire Department.

Identifying communication preferences of the generations represented in the

Warrensburg Fire Department will allow better communication in the department. Better

communication often reduces or prevents personnel issues. All services offered by the

Warrensburg Fire Department are affected by each individual department members' ability to

communicate and any improvement will likely increase the efficiency of the department.

Identification of communication issues, generation issues, and problem solving related to such issues in order to change an organizations culture to increase efficiency are linked to the *Executive Development Student Manual*, Unit 7, titled Organizational Culture and Changes (Department of Homeland Security, 2006). The United States Fire Administration (USFA) updated its strategic plan in 2009 and now labels the major operational objectives as goals of the strategic plan. This applied research project relates to USFA's (2009) goal 4, to "improve the fire and emergency services' professional status", objective 4.1, to "enhance the professionalism of the Nation's fire and emergency services leaders", and the strategy to "develop leadership skills through training and technical disciplines."

Literature Review

Strauss and Howe (1991, p. 85), stated, "To our knowledge, we are the first to define, locate and name the entire sequence of American generations." Their research and writings on American generations serves as a foundation for current research and theory (Lucht, n.d.). Strauss and Howe developed the idea that there are 4 generation personalities reoccurring in a cycle in America's history, with one documented exception related to the U.S. Civil War. The generation personalities are the result of shared or common experiences of each generation and the reaction of the generations to those experiences. The stage of life each generation is in also affects the respective generation's personality. The personality of each generation is directly affected by the preceding generation.

Strauss and Howe discuss the American generations beginning with the Puritan Generation born in 1584 and ending with predictions regarding the Millennial Generation born in 1982. The discussions detail historical events and context with adjacent generations. Strauss and Howe (1991, p.34) "define a generation as a special cohort-group whose length

approximately matches that of a basic phase of life, or about twenty-two years over the last three centuries." The generations currently working in the Warrensburg Fire Department, based on year of birth are: (a) The Silent Generation born 1925-1942, (b) the Boom Generation born 1943-1960, (c) the Thirteenth Generation born 1961-1981, and (d) the Millennial Generation born 1982-. The end of the birth year range of the Millennial Generation was not set by Strauss and Howe.

In 1997, Strauss and Howe published another book dealing with the impact of generations on events or history itself. "Generations, and their four recurring archetypes, create and perpetuate history's seasonal quality. Together, they explain how and why cycles occur" (Strauss & Howe, 1997, p. 15). They propose that the four generation archetypes, described in their previous work as personalities, occur in sequence. The stages of life identified by Strauss and Howe are; childhood, young adulthood, midlife, and elder hood. As the archetypes move through the four stages of life, they exert varying degrees of influence on the environment, affect other generations, and perpetuate the cycle identified by Strauss and Howe.

In order to understand the concept of reoccurring personalities or archetypes discussed by Strauss and Howe, it is necessary to understand the concept of the collective unconsciousness. "The contents of the collective unconsciousness, on the other hand, are known as archetypes" (Jung, 1969, p.4, para. 4). C. G. Jung, through the use of dream analysis, developed the concept of the collective unconsciousness. He noticed reoccurring images and situations in dream analysis that correlated to his studies in symbology and mythology. Jung's research revealed general archetypes or patterns of instinctual behavior. Precise identification of various archetypes is complicated by other psychological processes and individual experience.

Jung's concept of the collective unconsciousness put forth that all people possess the same general psychological structure at birth. The experience a person has in life reacts with the innate psychological structure. Psychological issues are often a result of an individual's psyche seeking to maintain balance between the different innate psychological structures based on the individual's life experience and genetics.

When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness appears, which, like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will, or else produces a conflict of pathological dimensions, that is to say, a neurosis (Jung, 1969, p. 48, para. 99).

Jung suggests that the archetypes apply to social organizations as well. "Since neuroses are in most case not just private concerns, but *social* phenomena, we must assume that archetypes are constellated in these cases too" (Jung, 1969, p. 48, para. 98). Jung's concept of social or group personalities and their reaction to experience correlates to Strauss and Howe's concept of generational personalities and archetypes.

Strauss and Howe, much like Jung, do not believe everyone of a given generation or archetype will be exactly the same and that variation exists among individuals due to numerous influences. Variation of birth date ranges and labels to describe generations is prevalent. Tables were developed and placed in the appendices showing the labels, birth year ranges, and communication preferences described by different sources.

The Silent Generation identified by Strauss and Howe (1991, 1997) is also labeled the Traditionalist or Traditional Generation and the Radio Babies (see Table A1). The birth year range established by Strauss and Howe for the Silent Generation is 1925 to 1942. Literature

indicates a variation of 30 years in the beginning birth year of the Silent Generation's birth year range. The ending year of the birth year range for the Silent Generation varies by 3 years.

The Boom Generation identified by Strauss and Howe as having a birth year range of 1943 to 1960 is also labeled the Baby Boomers (see Table B1). Literature indicates a variation of three years in the beginning birth year of the Boom Generation's birth year range. The ending year of the birth year range for the Boom Generation varies by four years. The Boom Generation is the most consistently defined of the four generations examined.

The Thirteenth Generation identified by Strauss and Howe as having a birth year range of 1961 to 1981 is also labeled Generation X, Generation Xers, Gen X and Xers (see Table C1). Literature indicates a variation of five years in the beginning birth year of the Thirteenth Generation's birth year range. The ending year of the birth year range for the Thirteenth Generation varies by five years. Gravett & Throckmorton (2007) inserted an additional generation labeled Generation Y with a birth year range of 1977-1990. Gravett and Throckmorton's Generation Y overlaps Strauss and Howe's Thirteenth and Millennial Generations.

The Millennial Generation identified by Strauss and Howe has only a beginning birth year in the birth year range of 1982 (see Table D1). The end birth year was not established due to the need to identify the beginning of the generation to follow the Millennial Generation. The Millennial Generation is also labeled as the Millennials, Generation Y, Gen Y and Echo Boomers. Literature indicates a variation of 11 years in the beginning birth year of the Millennial Generation's birth year range. The ending year of the birth year range for the Millennial Generation varies by 3 years when the end of the birth year range was indicated.

Cross generation communication is a common topic in current literature. Lancaster and Stillman (2002, p.xxv) tell a story where Lynne, a corporate coach, says that

> Many of her clients were now faced with up to four generations in a single room and were becoming more and more unsure of their ability to get their messages across to all of them. The only way to do it was to explore who these generations were and design messages that would connect them.

Pentilla (2009) references companies adopting communication policies to address the generational differences. Aker (2009) says that "It's important to appreciate every generation's modes of communication to better manage an age-diverse staff." DiRomualdo (2006) surveyed 70 knowledge workers from different companies and found that 15% frequently observed and 52% sometimes observed communications breakdowns between workers of different generations. Erickson (2009) identified the essential team activity of communicating among team members as one of four reasons for generational conflict. Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) said that, "Miscommunication and conflict across generations affects productivity, morale, and customer satisfaction."

Communication is a complex process and continues to changes with technology. Shephard (1998) identified the main communication methods as; audio tape/CD, videotape, CD-ROM, letters/memos/reports, manuals, printed materials, fax, e-mail, intranet, radio, TV, one-to-ones, meetings, phone, video conferencing. Of the methods identified by Shepard; audio tape/CD, videotape, and CD-ROMs have been more frequently replaced by newer media formats and social networks. Aker (2009) discusses the formality preference of generations and indicates that the younger generations normally prefer casual communication. Kersten (2002) discusses the difference in the definition of communications skills and that awareness of generational

differences is necessary to prevent miscommunication. Bacal, n.d., recommends the

identification of communication tools in an internal communications planning process to affect

cultural and organizational change. Mininni (2009) recommends using all available

communication media and methods to affect organizational change.

Information regarding specific communication preferences for each of the generations

was found to be generalized. More recent generations prefer more informal, technology based

communication methods allowing for immediate feedback (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007;

Hammill, 2005; Jopling, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Pentilla, 2009). The same authors

found that older generations preferred more formal communications methods such as letters,

memorandum, and face-to-face communication. The literature review provided little

quantifiable research information to compare communication preferences in the fire service

across generations, indicating a need for further research into the subject area. The lack of

research, variation of results, and generalizations found in the literature review led to the use of

the descriptive research methodology.

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

A review of available literature concerning generations, generation personality,

archetypes, generation issues or concerns in the work place, and generation communication

preferences was conducted. Books, periodicals, and internet sources were examined. Materials

not directly related to the research questions were excluded. No research was found dealing

specifically with generation communication method preferences in the fire service.

All members of the Warrensburg Fire Department were included in the study. A payroll

anniversary report was run on August 17, 2009 using the City of Warrensburg's Incode Central®

records management software.   Currently employed personnel of the Warrensburg Fire

Department were selected in the report as well as their respective birth dates. 44 personnel were employed by the Warrensburg Fire Department on August 17, 2009. The report indicated, based on birth years listed, that the Warrensburg Fire Department was comprised of 1 person from the Silent Generation, 6 persons from the Boomer Generation, 22 persons from the Thirteenth Generation, and 15 persons from the Millennial Generation. The Incode Central® report was not included or reproduced for this study as it included Social Security Numbers and the size of the Warrensburg Fire Department is small enough that listing positions by rank and birth date can easily be used to identify individual personnel.

A questionnaire was developed to capture data relevant to communication preferences of the identified generations. The range of birth years used by Strauss and Howe were used to identify generation of participants: (a) The Silent Generation born 1925-1942, (b) the Boom Generation born 1943-1960, (c) the Thirteenth Generation born 1961-1981, and (d) the Millennial Generation born 1982 and later. The end of the birth year range for the Millennial Generation was set at 1999, and had no direct impact on the results as personnel employed by the Warrensburg Fire Department must be 18 years of age by date of employment. The most recent birth year of current members of the Warrensburg Fire Department at the time of the study was 1990. Participants were asked to circle a range for the group that indicates the range in which their year of birth was indicated. The selected birth year range was used to identify each participant's generation for subsequent analysis.

Questionnaire participants were asked to rank the eight communications methods currently utilized by the Warrensburg Fire Department for given examples or situations. The eight communication methods commonly used by the Warrensburg Fire Department are: (a) Face-to-face, (b) meeting, (c) e-mail, (d) memorandum, (e) telephone or cell phone, (f) text

messaging, (g) bulletin board, and (h) intranet. Telephone and cell phone were grouped under

the same category as most members of the department have only cell phones. Internet

Messaging (IM) was not used as a communication method on the questionnaire as it was not

available for use at the Warrensburg Fire Department. The items were ranked on a scale of 1 to

8, with 1 being the most preferred and 8 being the least preferred.

The examples or situations on the questionnaire included: (a) Changes or updates in fire

department policy or procedures, (b) changes or updates in your scheduling, and (c)

opportunities or announcement of extra activities such as training, special assignments and

voluntary activities. (d) How do you prefer to routinely communicate with your supervisor? (e)

How do you prefer to communicate with your peers? (f) How do you prefer to communicate

with those that work directly for you? (g) How do you prefer to communication with your

immediate family? (h) How do you prefer to communicate with you friends? Participants were

also asked to provide any additional comments, suggestions or comments.

The questionnaires were tabulated. For each given example or situation, each

communication method ranking was averaged across the data samples to determine the average

ranking of communication methods for each given example or situation. The averages were

ranked in order of preference, with lowest average number to highest average number

representing a ranking of 1 being the most preferred and 8 being the least preferred. The average

ranking of the various samples were used for comparisons.

The average ranking of communication methods were determined for all Warrensburg

Fire Department personnel returning a questionnaire. The average ranking of communication

methods were determined for each of the four generations represented in the Warrensburg Fire

Department. The average ranking of communication methods based on standard generational

archetypes was developed based on preferences identified in the literature review. A comparison was made using the developed generational archetype preferences and generation distribution identified in the Warrensburg Fire Department.

Results

38 of the 44 questionnaires, or 86.4%, were returned. The selected birth year ranges on the questionnaires indicated that the questionnaires were completed by 7 personnel of the Boom Generation, 18 personnel of the Thirteenth Generation, and 13 personnel of the Millennial Generation. Birth years listed from the Incode Central® payroll anniversary report ran August 17, 2009 for employees of the Warrensburg Fire Department identified 1 person from the Silent Generation, 6 personnel from the Boom Generation, 22 personnel from the Thirteenth Generation, and 15 personnel from the Millennial Generation. No data was reported for the Silent Generation and an additional Boom Generation person was reported.

An error was noted on the questionnaire. Respondents were asked on the questionnaire to rank communication preferences with 1 being the most preferred and 9, instead of 8, being the least preferred. Only eight communication methods for ranking were included with each situation or example. 12 respondents ranked each individual communication method for each given situation or example on a scale of 1 being most preferred to 9 being least preferred. Two sets of data were recorded; the complete sample and the sample excluding the results from 12 questionnaires that did not rank the communication methods in the intended manner.

The department rankings showed a preference for meetings, e-mail, and face-to-face as the communication methods for receiving information regarding changes or updates in fire department policy or procedures (see Table F1). The Boom Generation personnel preferred meeting. The Thirteenth Generation personnel preferred e-mail. The Millennial Generation

personnel preferred the face-to-face method. Department personnel ranked intranet, bulletin boards, and text messaging as the least preferred method for receiving information regarding changes or updates in fire department policy or procedure.

The department rankings showed a preference for face-to-face and e-mail for the communication methods for receiving information regarding changes or updates in scheduling (see Table G1). All three generations represented by department personnel ranked face-to-face as the preferred communication method for this example. As the second preferred communication method; the Boom Generation personnel preferred meetings or e-mail, the Thirteen Generation personnel preferred telephone, and the Millennial Generation preferred e-mail. Department personnel ranked text messaging, intranet, bulletin boards, and memorandum as the least preferred methods for receiving information regarding changes or updates in scheduling.

E-mail, face-to-face, and meetings are the preferred communication methods of department personnel for receiving information regarding opportunities or announcement of extra activities such as training, special assignments and voluntary activities (see Table H1). Boom Generation and Thirteenth personnel showed a primary preference for e-mail, while the Millennial Generation personnel showed a primary preference for face-to-face. The communication methods least preferred by department personnel for receiving information regarding opportunities or announcement of extra activities were the intranet, bulletin boards, and memorandum.

Face-to-face and telephone are the preferred communication methods of department personnel for routinely communicating with supervisors (see Table I1). All three generations represented ranked face-to-face as the primary preference. As a secondary preference, the Boom

Generation personnel preferred e-mail, the Thirteenth Generation personnel preferred telephone, and the Millennial Generation personnel preferred e-mail or meetings. The least preferred communication method of department personnel for routinely communicating with supervisors were the intranet, bulletin boards, and memorandum.

Department personnel preferred to communicate with peers using the face-to-face and meeting methods (see Table J1). The primary and secondary preferences were shared by the Boom Generation and Millennial Generation personnel. The Thirteenth Generation showed a secondary preference for the telephone. The intranet, bulletin boards, and memorandum methods were the least preferred by department personnel for communicating with peers.

Department personnel ranked face-to-face and meetings as the primary and secondary preferred communication methods for communicating with direct subordinates (see Table K1). All three represented generations ranked face-to-face as their primary preference. Boom Generation and Millennial Generation personnel ranked meeting as the second preference while the Thirteenth Generation personnel ranked telephone as the second preference. The intranet and bulletin boards were ranked by department personnel as the least preferred communication methods for communicating with direct subordinates.

Face-to-face and telephone were the preferred communication methods for department personnel to communicate with family (see Table L1). All three represented generations showed the same preference for ranked primary and secondary communication methods. Bulletin boards, intranet, and memorandum rank the lowest as preferred communication methods for communicating with immediate family.

The preferred communication methods for communicating with friends were ranked as face-to-face and telephone by department personnel (see Table M1). The primary and secondary

preferences were shared by all three represented generations. The communication methods for

communicating with friends ranked lowest by department personnel were bulletin boards,

memorandum, and the intranet.

Five comments were received with the questionnaires. A Boom Generation person

pointed out the error in the questionnaire "only 8 items scoring 1-9." Three Thirteenth

Generation personnel provided comment. The first commented that, "all communication should

be done face to face or in a group setting. Anything that needs to be documented should be sent

through e-mail in addition to face to face meeting." The second Thirteenth Generation person

said, "I prefer fact to face or meeting or verbal direct to have clarification & detail, in writing is a

good second to have written understanding to go back and reference." The third Thirteen

Generation person commented that "I always prefer talking to a person either face 2 face or by

phone over all other electronic communication methods." The Millennial Generation person said

that

> Personal face to face and meetings are preferred. This shows interest by taking time to
>
> talk with someone. It also allows for miscommunications to be ironed out immediately,
>
> rather than the long time back and forth by e-mail. This extra time allows for
>
> miscommunication to grow, and rumors to spread.

Face-to-face communication was identified as the most preferred communication method

for the department respondents independent of the situations or examples provided in the

questionnaire (see Table N1). Face-to-face was also the preferred communication method

identified by the three generations studied. Meeting was the secondary communication method

for the Boom Generation personnel and the Millennial Generation personnel, while the

Thirteenth Generation personnel preferred telephone as their secondary preferred communication

method. The intranet was the least preferred communication method identified by all three

studied generations.

The communication method preferences based on standard generational archetypes in

current literature and research was found to be very general in nature. The Silent Generation

personnel should prefer more formal communication such as memorandum, mailed letters, face-

to-face (see Table A1). Phones are acceptable. No Silent Generation responses were received,

so no comparisons were possible with the collected data. The Boom Generation should prefer e-

mail, telephones, answering machines, and face-to-face (see Table B1). The Thirteenth

Generation should prefer e-mail, telephones, voice mail, and internet messaging methods that

allow for direct, immediate feedback and rely heavily on technology (see Table C1). The

Millennial Generation should prefer IM to e-mail and use of texting and telephones (see Table

D1). It was not possible to construct a valid ranking of the preferred communication methods

based on standard generational archetypes or standard generational preference as sufficient data

was not found.

With only general information available regarding preferred communication method

preferences for the studied generations, it was necessary to look at the general communication

method preferences of Warrensburg Fire Department Personnel (see Table N1). The Millennial

generation personnel in the study generally preferred face-to-face and meetings as their preferred

communication methods. The Thirteenth Generation personnel showed a higher preference for

the use of telephone than the Boom Generation and Millennial Generation personnel. The

Millennial Generation personnel in the study indicated a lower preference for memorandum as a

communication method than the Boom Generation or Thirteenth Generation personnel. The

Millennial Generation also showed a higher preference for use of bulletin boards as a

communication method than the Boom or Thirteenth Generation personnel in the study. The use of the intranet as a communication method was the least preferred by all three generations in the study.

No specific data was collected in the study regarding the communication methods currently used by the Warrensburg Fire Department or methods for improving the communication. The results found in the study are representative of the respondents employed by the Warrensburg Fire Department at the time of the study. The population and sample size used in the study may not be representative of the three studied generations in the fire service as a whole.

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

The review of literature found an indicated preference for the more recent generations, the Thirteenth and Millennial Generation in this study, for more informal, technology based communication methods allowing for immediate feedback (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Hammill, 2005; Jopling, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Pentilla, 2009). The same authors found that older generations prefer more formal communication methods such as letter, memorandum, and face-to-face communication. The study results did not match the predicted results based on technology alone. The results indicated that the Millennial Generation respondents in the study preferred communication methods allowing for immediate feedback and interaction regardless of the technology use such as the face-to-face, meeting, and telephone methods. The text messaging communication method used in the study is a more recent technology and was more preferred by the Thirteenth and Millennial Generation respondents than the Boom Generation respondents.

The Thirteenth Generation respondents in the study indicated a higher preference for the use of the telephone and e-mail communication methods compared to the Boom and Millennial Generation respondents. The Boom and Millennial Generation respondents indicated a higher preference for meeting that the Thirteenth Generation respondents. The Millennial Generation respondents in the study indicated a higher preference for the bulletin board communication method compared to the Boom and Thirteenth Generation respondents. These differences in communication method preferences can to lead communication problems and generational conflicts (Aker, 2009; DiRomualdo, 2006; Erickson, 2009; Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Kersten, 2002; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

To improve communication in the Warrensburg Fire Department, it will be necessary to utilize communication methods that will be received better by the intended audiences. Training personnel to understand the differences in communication method preferences based on generations and to appreciate the diversity of such preferences is necessary (Aker, 2009; Kersten, 2002). Training and identification of communication methods to be used for various activities needs to be addressed and could entail the adoption of formal policy to limit miscommunication issues across generations (Bacal, n.d.; Pentilla, 2009). Use of multiple communication methods to communicate within the department is necessary to better insure that communication is received by the represented generations (Mininni, 2009).

The general preference for face-to-face, meeting and telephone communication methods by department personnel indicates a need to use face-to-face, meeting and telephone communication methods to insure that messages are more readily received. Lack of using face-to-face, meetings, and the telephone communication methods to interact with department personnel can lead to communication problems or miscommunication. The intranet should not

be used for important communication or the sole means of communication as it will not be received well.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

A training program needs to be developed for the Warrensburg Fire Department. The training should include the definition and characteristics of the generations represented in the department to provide a better understanding of the represented generations. The results of the communication preference questionnaire should be included in the training to illustrate the preferences indicated in the study to aid in the understanding and importance of such training. Department policies and expectations regarding communication need to be covered in the training. Periodic reviews of the effectiveness of communication in the department needs to occur to compensate for changes in composition of the department's personnel. The need to communicate using multiple methods of communication is required as well as an explanation of the need for using multiple communication methods.

Training to improve communication methods in the department should lead to increased department efficiency as well as a decrease in communication related problems or issues. Better utilization of available communication methods and the use of multiple communication methods will allow the communication of department goals, objectives, and policies to allow for organizational change. Understanding the communication method preferences of department personnel should also allow for better two-way communication, or upward and downward communication. Improvement in communication will allow the Warrensburg Fire Department to be more adaptable and react quicker to internal issues. Improvement of internal communication will likely result in better external communication.

Further study of the topic is necessary as results will vary from organization to organization. Stage of life influence was not examined in the study. The potential impact of individual personality could be studied to see if the personality of fire service personnel varies from the general population or has specific characteristics based on organization type that affect preferred communication methods. The type or purpose of the communication and desired results of communication, or communication effectiveness was not studied.

There is an indicated preference for Warrensburg Fire Department personnel for face-to-face, meeting, telephone communication methods. The indicated preferences could be compared to preferred communication methods of the general population or other occupational fields. The study was conducted independent of rank or position in the Warrensburg Fire Department. The preferred communication methods could be impacted by position or function in the organization.

Improvement of the current study for further replication or application to another organization should include thorough review of the questionnaire to prevent the ranking scale error in this study. The questionnaire should include more detailed instructions and an example of the intended method of ranking to aid in receiving the desire ranking method. Questions regarding the communication methods used by the organization and the perceived effectiveness of such methods could be examined to aide in improving organization communication and to provide a comparison between what an organization uses to what its personnel prefer. An examination of communication methods not used by the organization and recommended by personnel could be conducted to see if more efficient communication methods are available.

Reference List

Aker, J. (2009, January). *Managing a multigenerational workforce.* Retrieved April 1, 2009 from

http://www.buildings.com/ArticleDetails/tabid/3321/ArticleID/6836/Default.aspx.

Bacal, R. *Internal communication strategies – The neglected strategic element.* Retrieved April

2, 2009 from http://performance-appraisals.org/Bacalsappraisalarticles/articles/com

strat.htm.

Department of Homeland Security. (2006). *Executive development* (3rd ed.). Emmitsburg, MD:

Author.

DiRomualdo, T. (2006, August 14). *Geezers, Grungers, Gen-Xers and Geeks – A look at

workplace generational conflict*. Wisconsin Technology Network. Retrieved April 2,

2009 from http://wistechnology.com/articles/3224/.

Erickson, T. (2009, February 16). *The four biggest reasons for generational conflict in teams*.

Retrieved April 2, 2009 from http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/erickson/2009/02/the_four

_biggest_reasons_for_i.html.

Gravett, L., & Throckmorton, R. (2007). *Bridging the generation gap: How to get Radio Babies,

Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers to work together and achieve more*. Franklin Lakes,

NJ: Career Press.

Hammill, G. (2005). Mixing and managing four generations of employees. *FDU Magazine*.

Retrieved April 1, 2009 from http://fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/05ws/generations.htm.

Jopling, J. (2004). *Understanding generations.* West Virginia University Extension Service.

Jung, C. (1969). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. New York, New York:

Princeton Press.

Kersten, D. (2002, November 15). Today's generations face new communication gaps. *USA*

    Today. Retrieved April 1, 2009 from http//www.usatoday.com/money/jobcenter/workpla

    ce/communication/2002-11-15-communication-gap_x.htm.

Lancaster, L., & Stillman, D. (2002). *When generations collide: Who they are: Why they clash:*

    How to solve the generational puzzle at work. New York, New York: HarperCollins.

Lucht, D. (n.d.). Millennials-The new source of young talent. *Fire Protection Engineering*.

    Retrieved April 2, 2009 from http://www.fpemag.com/articles/article.asp?i=329.

Mininni, L. (2009, February 8). *Five ways to create successful change in the workplace*.

    Retrieved July 8, 2009 from http://www.salesandmarketing.com/msg/content_display/pu

    blications/e3i0f0603771789fb8d2a9b68e235cd7148.

Penttila, C. (2009, March). Talking about my generation Gen Xers, Gen Yers, Millennials and

    Boomers are all working alongside each other: But how do you get them to work well

    together? *Entrepreneur Magazine*. Retrieved April 1, 2009 from http://www.entrepreneu

    r.com/magazine/entrepreneur/2009/march/200104.html.

Shepard, C. (1998). *Assessing your communication options*. Retrieved April 2, 2009 from

    http://www.fastrak-consulting.co.uk/tactix/features/commopts/commopts.htm.

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The history of America's future, 1584 to 2069*.

    New York, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1997). *The fourth turning: An American prophecy*. New York:

    Broadway Books.

United States Fire Administration. (2009). *United States Fire Administration: America's fire and*

    emergency services leader Strategic plan fiscal years 2009-2013. Retrieved August 25,

    2009 from http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/strategic_plan.pdf.

Appendix A

Silent Generation Birth Year Ranges and Communication

Table A1

Source	Label	Birth Year Range	Communication
Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997	Silent Generation	1925-1942	
Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007	Radio Babies	1930-1945	
Hammill, 2005	Veterans, Silents, Traditionalist	1922-1945	Formal memo.
Jopling, 2004	Silent or Traditional Generation	1922-1952	Mailed letters or face-to-face contacts. Phones OK.
Kersten, 2002	Traditionalist	1922-1943	More likely to write a memo than shout across a room.
Lancaster & Stillman, 2002	Traditionalist	1900-1945	
Lucht, n.d	Silent Generation	1925-1942	

Note. Strauss and Howe were listed first as their established birth year range for the Silent

Generation was used for this study.

Appendix B

Boom Generation Birth Year Ranges and Communication

Table B1

Source	Label	Birth Year Range	Communication
Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997	Boom Generation	1943-1960	
Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007	Baby Boomers	1943-1964	
Hammill, 2005	Baby Boomers	1946-1964	In person
Jopling, 2004	Baby Boomers	1946-1964	Prefer e-mail and like phones and answering machines
Kersten, 2002	Baby Boomers	1943-1960	
Lancaster & Stillman, 2002	Baby Boomers	1946-1964	
Lucht, n.d.	Boom Generation	1943-1960	
Penttila, 2009			E-mail, cell phones and face to face

Note. Strauss and Howe were listed first as their established birth year range for the Boom

Generation was used for this study.

Appendix C

Thirteenth Generation Birth Year Ranges and Communication

Table C1

Source	Label	Birth Year Range	Communication
Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997	Thirteenth Generation	1961-1981	
Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007	Generation X	1965-1976[a]	Rely heavily on technology
Hammill, 2005	Generation X, GenX, Xers	1965-1980	Direct, immediate
Jopling, 2004	Generation X	1965-1980	E-mail, use cell phones and depend on answering machines or voice mail
Kersten, 2002	Generation X	1960-1980	
Lancaster & Stillman, 2002	Generation Xers	1965-1980	
Lucht, n.d.	Generation X	1961-1981	
Penttila, 2009			E-mail, IM and cellphones

Note. Strauss and Howe were listed first as their established birth year range for the Thirteenth Generation was used for this study. IM= internet messenger.

[a]Gravett & Throckmorton list Generation Y with a birth year range of 1977 to 1990 between their Generation X and Millenials.

Appendix D

Millennial Generation Birth Year Ranges and Communication

Table D1

Source	Label	Birth Year Range	Communication
Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997	Millennial Generation	1982-	
Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007	Millennials	1991-	
Hammill, 2005	Generation Y, Gen Y, Millennial, Echo Boomers	1981-2000	E-mail, voice mail
Jopling, 2004	Generation Y (Why)	1981-	IM is preferred. E-mail is fine.
Kersten, 2002	Millenials	1980-2002	
Lancaster & Stillman, 2002	The Millennial Generation	1981-1999	
Lucht, n.d.	Millennial Generation	1982-	
Penttila, 2009			Texting, cell phones and IM

Note. Strauss and Howe were listed first as their established birth year range for the Millennial

Generation was used for this study. IM= internet messenger.

Appendix E

Communication Preference Questionnaire
August 17, 2009

Please complete the following questionnaire and return to Assistant Fire Chief Sean Douglas.

1. The date of my birth falls in the following range (circle one):

    A. 1925-1942

    B. 1943-1960

    C. 1961-1981

    D. 1982-1999

2. For the following examples, please rank how you would prefer to receive the information

    with 1 being the most preferred and 9 being the least preferred.

    a. Changes or updates in fire department policy or procedures.

        _____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

        _____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

        _____ E-Mail

        _____ Memorandum

        _____ Telephone or Cell phone

        _____ Text Messaging

        _____ Bulletin Board

        _____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

    b. Changes or updates in your scheduling.

        _____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

        _____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

c. Opportunities or announcement of extra activities such as training, special

assignments and voluntary activities.

_____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

_____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

d. How do you prefer to routinely communicate with your supervisor?

_____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

_____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

e. How do you prefer to communicate with your peers?

_____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

_____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

f. How do you prefer to communicate with those that work directly for you?

_____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

_____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

g. How do you prefer to communicate with your immediate family?

_____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

_____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

h. How do you prefer to communicate with your friends?

_____ Face-to-Face (One-on-One)

_____ Meeting (Group Discussion)

_____ E-Mail

_____ Memorandum

_____ Telephone or Cell phone

_____ Text Messaging

_____ Bulletin Board

_____ Intranet (Shared Computer Server Files, Computer Access, Web Page)

3. Please provide any additional comments, suggestions or comments below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Receipt of Information Regarding Changes or

Updates in Fire Department Policy or Procedure

Table F1

		Generations					
Communication	Department		Boom		Thirteenth		Millennial	
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	2	2[a]	2	3	2[a]	3	1	1
Meeting	1	2[a]	1	1	2[a]	2	2	2
E-Mail	3	1	3	2	1	1	3	3
Memorandum	5	4	4	4	6[a]	4	5	6
Telephone	4	3	5[a]	6[a]	3	5	4	4
Text Messaging	6	6	7	7	4	6	8	7
Bulletin Board	7	5	5[a]	6[a]	5	7	7	5
Intranet	8	7	6	5	6[a]	8	6	8

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix G

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Receipt of Information Regarding Changes or

Updates in Scheduling

Table G1

| Communication | Department | | Generations | | | | | |
| | | | Boom | | Thirteenth | | Millennial | |
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	4	4	2	3	5	5	4	4
E-Mail	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2
Memorandum	6	6	5	6	6	6	5	5^a
Telephone	3	3	4	4	2	2	3	3
Text Messaging	5	5	6	5	4	4	7	6^a
Bulletin Board	7	7	7	7	7	7	6^a	5^a
Intranet	8	8	8	8	8	8	6^a	6^a

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix H

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Receipt of Information Regarding

Opportunities or Announcement of Extra Activities such as Training, Special Assignments and

Voluntary Activities

Table H1

| Communication | Department | | Generations | | | | | |
| | | | Boom | | Thirteenth | | Millennial | |
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	2	2	3	5	2	2	1	1
Meeting	3	3	2	2	3	3	2^a	2
E-Mail	1	1	1	1	1	1	2^a	3
Memorandum	6	6	4	3	6	6	6	8
Telephone	4	4	5^a	6	4	5	3	4
Text Messaging	5	5	6	7	5	4	5	6
Bulletin Board	7	7	5^a	4	7	7	4	5
Intranet	8	8	7	8	8	8	7	7

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix I

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Routinely Communicating with Supervisors

Table I1

Communication			Generations					
			Boom		Thirteenth		Millennial	
	Department							
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	2
E-Mail	3	4	2	2	4	3	2	3
Memorandum	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	5
Telephone	2	2	4	3	2	2	4	4
Text Messaging	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	6
Bulletin Board	7	7	7	7	8	7	7	7
Intranet	8	8	8	8	7	8	8	8

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

Appendix J

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Communicating with Peers

Table J1

Communication	Department		Boom		Thirteenth		Millennial	
			Generations					
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	2	2	2	2	3	4	2	2
E-Mail	4	4	3	3	5	5	4	4
Memorandum	6	6	5	5	6	6	7	8
Telephone	3	3	4	4	2	2	3	3
Text Messaging	5	5	6	6	4	3	5	5
Bulletin Board	7	7	7	7	7	7	6[a]	6
Intranet	8	8	8	8	8	8	6[a]	7

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix K

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Communicating with Direct Subordinates

Table K1

| | | | Generations | | | | | |
| Communication | Department | | Boom | | Thirteenth | | Millennial | |
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
E-Mail	4	4	3	3	5	4[a]	4	4
Memorandum	6	6	5	5	6	5	6	7
Telephone	3	3	4	4	2	2	3	3
Text Messaging	5	5	5	6	4	4[a]	5	5
Bulletin Board	7	7	6	8	8	6	7	6
Intranet	8	8	7	7	7	7	8	8

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix L

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Communication with Immediate Family

Table L1

	Department		Generations					
			Boom		Thirteenth		Millennial	
Communication								
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	4	4	3	4[a]	4	4	3	3
E-Mail	5	5	5	4[a]	5	5	5	5
Memorandum	6	6	6	5	7	6	6	3
Telephone	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Text Messaging	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	4
Bulletin Board	8	7	7	6	6	7	8	7
Intranet	7	8	8	7	8	8	7	8

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix M

Ranked Communication Method Preferences for Communication with Friends

Table M1

	Generations							
Communication	Department		Boom		Thirteenth		Millennial	
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
E-Mail	5	5	3	2^a	5	5	5	4
Memorandum	7	6	6	5	6^a	6	8	5
Telephone	2	2	2	2^a	2	2	2	2
Text Messaging	3	3	5	3	3	3	4	3
Bulletin Board	8	7	7	6^a	7	7	7	5
Intranet	6	8	8	6^a	6^a	8	6	6

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.

[a]Communication method tied in ranking with another communication method.

Appendix N

Ranked Communication Preferences Independent of Situations or Examples

Table N1

	Department		Generations					
			Boom		Thirteenth		Millennial	
Communication								
Method	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Face-to-Face	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meeting	2	2	2	3	4	4	2	2
E-Mail	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	4
Memorandum	6	6	5	5	6	6	7	7
Telephone	3	4	4	4	2	2	3	3
Text Messaging	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5
Bulletin Board	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6
Intranet	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Note. Not all questionnaires were ranked by respondents in the intended fashion. To

compensate, two sets of results were shown. A= Ranking of all sample data, B= Ranking of

sample data excluding questionnaire results not ranked in the intended fashion.